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**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

Assay methods are disclosed having utility in the identification of therapeutic agents effective against human hepatitis C virus and related viruses. NS3 protein derived from these viruses, representing a native and authentic version of the complete protein sequence, is used in the assay methods of the invention, which enables identification and development of anti-viral agents exhibiting inhibition of the protein's NTPase and RNA helicase activities.

10010860-120701